

THE TANDEM PROJECT

<http://www.tandemproject.com>.

UNITED NATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

*The Tandem Project is a UN NGO in Special Consultative Status with the
Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*

Separation of Religion or Belief and State

PROPOSAL

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FORUM

ACADEMIC DISCOURSE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO ACADEMIC FACULTY, GOVERNMENTS & CIVIL SOCIETY

*Program on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief for Study, Research
and Engagement from Multidisciplinary Perspectives at the University of Toronto*

OBJECTIVE: Implement a multidisciplinary program at the University of Toronto for Study, Research and Engagement on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief as recommended in the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2010-2014) Second Phase Action Plan for Higher Education.*

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/education/training/secondphase.htm>

In 1962 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution asking ECOSOC and the UN Human Rights Commission to prepare a **legally-binding** international human rights convention on religious intolerance, later deferred by religious and diplomatic leaders because of its **complexity and political sensitivity**.

Fifty years later, the UN General Assembly has adopted Resolution 66/167 by consensus to combat such intolerance. It may be the best hope since 1962 to **reconcile issues and divergent views on human rights and freedom of religion or belief, assimilation and multiculturalism**. The Resolution calls for an open public debate of ideas and strengthened global dialogue at all levels to implement 66/167.

Academic Schools, Departments and Institutes, Governments and Civil Society and Keynote Speakers in this Forum Proposal **have not been approached or asked for an endorsement**. The Tandem Project, as a follow-up to *UN Universal Periodic Reviews & Freedom of Religion or Belief*, proposes academic forums be held by **secular and religious universities and colleges worldwide**, on ways to implement international human rights law on freedom of religion or belief, in tandem with the *UN World Programme for Human Rights Education* Second Phase (2010-2014) for Higher Education.

QUESTION: At a **local** level how can Resolution 66/167 – *a Culture of Tolerance and Peace Based on Religion or Belief* protect your rights and beliefs, cultural and ethnic identity, and moral values, in tandem with **international** human rights law based on religion or belief? Your views will be appreciated on this Question and the Proposed Forum for **reports** on how to implement 66/167 at local level.

Reply to: Michael M. Roan, Director, The Tandem Project, mroan@tandemproject.com (612) 825-2842

[United Nations Resolution – a Culture of Tolerance & Peace Based on Religion or Belief](#)

Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief

PROPOSED AGENDA

OPENING QUESTIONS: Keynote Speakers

Keynote Speaker, (to be proposed)

University of Toronto

<http://www.utoronto.ca/>

What obstacles are there to a program being implemented on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief for Study, Research and Engagement from Multidisciplinary Perspectives at the University of Toronto?

Keynote Speaker, (to be proposed)

Governments & Civil Society

<http://www.toronto.ca/>

How can UN General Assembly Resolution 66/167, a Culture of Tolerance and Peace Based on Religion or Belief, be taught at a local level in Toronto to protect your rights and beliefs, cultural and ethnic identity and moral values, in tandem with international human rights law based on religion or belief?

International human rights law on freedom of religion or belief protects *theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief*, - General Comment 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

[http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/9a30112c27d1167cc12563ed004d8f15?Opendocument)

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: Response to Questions

Academic Faculty (proposed invitation list)

- **Academic Units, Departments, Centres and Institutes: Arts and Sciences, Education, Law, Public Policy and Governance, Graduate Studies, Global Affairs, Medicine; Anthropology and Study of Religions, Biology, Economics, History, Linguistics, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Religion, Sociology, Social Studies, Theory and Policy Studies in Education; Humanities Centre, Centre for Study of Sexual Diversity, Institute for Women’s Study and Gender Studies, Centre for Ethic, City Centre, Centre for Aboriginal Studies.**

Governments & Civil Society (proposed invitation list)

- **City of Toronto Elected Officials and Departments, Human Rights Commissions Province Elected Officials, Public Schools, Police; Toronto Religions or Beliefs , Non-governmental Anti-Discrimination Organizations, Amnesty International, Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), Oxfam, Canada, Community Advisory Panel, Others (to be proposed).**

**World Programme for Human Rights Education (2010-2014)
Second Phase Action Plan for Higher Education ***

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/education/training/secondphase.htm>

Draft plan of action for the second phase (2010-2014) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (A/HRC/15/28): U.N. Human Rights Council

(b) Teaching and learning processes and tools

27. Introducing or improving human rights education in the higher education system requires adopting a holistic approach to teaching and learning, by integrating programme objectives and content, resources, methodologies, assessment and evaluation; by looking beyond the classroom and the higher-education institution to society; and by building partnerships between different members of the academic community and beyond.

(v) Develop multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary human rights academic programmes.²⁰

²⁰ **Multidisciplinary programmes would include the study, research and engagement with human rights from different disciplinary perspectives, such as philosophy, sociology, languages, international and domestic law, etc. Interdisciplinary programmes would entail the crossing of boundaries between disciplines and the pooling of approaches and methodologies to study, research and engage with human rights with a new integrated perspective.**

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

<http://www.utoronto.ca/>

The University of Toronto is home to one of the world's strongest research faculties. According to the Times Higher Education Supplement, 2008, the University of Toronto is one of only five universities world-wide ranked in the top 16 for all fields – the other four are UC Berkeley, Cambridge, Oxford and Stanford. Our professors lead their fields, collaborating to produce innovative research and sharing their expertise with U of T students.

There can be no adequate understanding of the most important issues we face when disciplines are cloistered from one another and operate on their own premises. It would be far more effective to bring together people working on questions of religion, politics, history, economics, anthropology, sociology, literature, art, religion and philosophy to engage in comparative analysis of common problems. As the curriculum is restructured, fields of inquiry and methods of investigation will be transformed.

End of the University as We Know It – Collaboration Rather than Specialization, New York Times Op-Ed, April 29, 2007, Mark C. Taylor, Chairman of the Religion Department, Columbia University, New York.

FOCUS GROUP ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

**NEW CALL FOR OPEN PUBLIC DEBATE OF IDEAS AND
STRENGTHENED GLOBAL DIALOGUE AT ALL LEVELS**

PURPOSE: Internet Focus Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief in support of UN General Assembly Resolution 66/167 - *a Culture of Tolerance and Peace Based on Religion or Belief*.

[United Nations Resolution – a Culture of Tolerance & Peace Based on Religion or Belief](#)

Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief

To join the Focus Group please complete this questionnaire and hit Submit: [QUESTIONNAIRE](#)

Type your full name, e-mail address, name of your organization and select one category before answering the Y/N Questions.

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Resolution 66/167 began as Resolution A/HRC/ 16/18/L.38 introduced by Pakistan in the UN Human Rights Council on March 24, 2011 and **adopted by consensus**. The Resolution was introduced by the United Arab Emirates in the UN General Assembly in New York as A/C.3/66/L.47 on November 11, 2011 and **adopted by consensus**.

On December 19, 2011 Resolution 66/167 was **adopted by consensus** by the UN General Assembly. Adoption comes after **years of no consensus votes** on contentious issues between the European Union (EU), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and other UN Member States.

UN General Assembly Resolution 66/167

Recognizes that the open public debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels can be among the best protections against religious intolerance, and can play a positive role in strengthening democracy and combating religious hatred, and convinced that a continuing dialogue on these issues can help overcome existing misperceptions.

Calls for strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and diversity of religions and beliefs, and decides to convene a panel discussion on this issue at its seventeenth session within existing resources.

Introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted by consensus without a vote. - Resolution A/HRC/16/18/L.38, Geneva, March 24 2011

Pakistan (on behalf of the OIC) Mr. Zamir Akram [\[English\]](#) 10 minutes **Saudi Arabia** Mr. Ahmed Suleiman Ibrahim Alaquil [\[English\]](#) [\[Arabic\]](#) 1 minute **Norway** Ms. Beate Stirø [\[English\]](#) 2 minutes **United States of America** Ms. Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe [\[English\]](#) 5 minutes **Hungary (on behalf of the European Union)** Mr. András Dékány [\[English\]](#) 3 minutes

The Human Rights Council held a panel discussion which focused on strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and diversity of religions and beliefs.

[UN Human Rights Council Panel Statements, Resolution A-HRC-16-18, 2010 General Assembly Third Committee Actions](#)

The warning signs are clear: unless we establish a genuine dialogue within and among all kinds of belief, ranging from religious fundamentalism to secular dogmatism, the conflicts of the future will probably be even more deadly. – Mark C. Taylor, New York Times Op Ed, 21 December 2006

BACKGROUND READING

FORUM ON HUMAN RIGHTS & FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

(1) *How does the University of Toronto, Toronto Governments and Civil Society combat intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief?*

(2) *World Programme for Human Rights Education Second Phase Action Plan for Higher Education*. (2010-2014). <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/education/training/secondphase.htm>

(3) *A Culture of Tolerance and Peace Based on Religion or Belief*. [United Nations Resolution – a Culture of Tolerance & Peace Based on Religion or Belief](#)

(4) *UN History: Freedom of Religion or Belief*: <http://www.tandemproject.com/program/history.htm>

REFLECTIONS

The Tandem Project

The First Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Surely one of the best hopes for humankind is to embrace a culture in which religions and other beliefs accept one another, in which wars and violence are not tolerated in the name of an exclusive right to truth, in which children are raised to solve conflicts with mediation, compassion and understanding.

There is an increase in dialogue today between religions and other beliefs to embrace diversity, but few persons, less than one percent of any population, ever participate. This is a challenge. The value of such dialogues is proportionate to the level of participation. For civil society increased participation would create opportunities for education on inclusive and genuine approaches to human rights and freedom of religion or belief.

In 1968 the United Nations deferred passage of a legally-binding convention on religious intolerance saying it was too complicated and sensitive. Instead, they adopted a non-binding declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. While very worthwhile, the declaration does not carry the force and commitment of a legally-binding international human rights convention on freedom of religion or belief.

Religions and other beliefs historically have been used to justify wars and settle disputes. This is more dangerous today as the possible use of nuclear and biological weapons of mass destruction increases. Governments need to consider whether religions and other beliefs trump human rights or human rights trump religions and other beliefs or neither trumps the other. Can international human rights law help to stop the advance and use of such weapons in the face of this historic truth?

- **QUESTION:** Weapons of mass destruction as history teaches are often legitimized for national security and justified by cultural, ethnic, religious or political ideology. The U.N. Review Conference on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and studies on biological and cyber weapons demonstrate advances in science and technology is being used to increase their potential for mass destruction. The question is whether an International Convention on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief, elevated and supported equally by the U.N. Human Rights Council and U.N. Security Council, would help offset the risk of weapons of mass destruction. Recognition of the need for synergy to balance rights and security is a foundation for solving this issue.

“I am become death, the destroyer of worlds”

- Robert Oppenheimer, quote from the Bhagavad Gita after exploding the first atomic bomb, Trinity 1945.

The Tandem Project believes until a core legally-binding human rights Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief is adopted international human rights law will be incomplete. It may be time to begin to consider reinstating the 1968 Working Group to bring all matters relating to freedom of religion or belief under one banner, a core international human rights legally-binding treaty.

The Tandem Project a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1986 to build understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity of religion or belief, and to prevent discrimination in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief. The Tandem Project has sponsored multiple conferences, curricula, reference material and programs on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion – and the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.